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STATE FOR NEA

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SUBJECT: IRANIAN AMBASSADOR'S MODERATE PUBLIC STATEMENTS  
TOWARD THE U.S.

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Adam Ereli for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a June 30 interview with Bahrain's largest daily, Iran's Ambassador to Bahrain Hossen Amir Abdollahian said that Iran is responding to America's positive rhetoric "in kind." According to the Editor-in-Chief who conducted the interview, Abdollahian also pointedly refrained from taking the bait in criticizing President Obama. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In an interview published on June 30 by leading Bahraini daily Al-Wasat, the Iranian Ambassador Hossen Amir Abdollahian criticized Britain heavily, but studiously refrained from going after the U.S. When asked about Iran's response to American "gestures" such as the President's appointment of Dennis Ross, Abdollahian said, "With regard to Iran's actions toward the United States, we believe that we are reciprocating; that is, if rhetoric by the United States (toward Iran) is positive, we are also responding with positive rhetoric (toward the United States)."

¶3. (U) Abdollahian contrasted President Obama's calls for dialogue with the President's "hasty stance toward Iran" in the wake of post-election unrest. He said the latter was based on "misconceived and false analysis about the situation in Iran (by agencies in the Administration)...on which President Obama based his position (toward Iran)." He further stated, "What we want from President Obama and his team is that U.S. intelligence agencies carefully analyze the new situation in Iran, and despite what is happening in the Iranian streets, that they come to a correct conclusion."

¶4. (C) The Editor-in-Chief of Al-Wasat, Mansoor Al Jamri, was eager to draw emboffs' attention to the interview and called us before its publication to provide a read out of behind-the-scenes dynamics. Al Jamri noted that Abdollahian was "deliberately easy" on President Obama and declined to take up several opportunities Al Jamri gave him to criticize the President. He added that Abdollahian is "credible" and has "inside knowledge" of regime dynamics in Iran based on previous involvement in U.S.-Iranian security negotiations in Baghdad.

¶5. (C) Bio data: Abdollahian has been Iran's ambassador here since August 2007. He served previously as the head of the Special Committee for Iraq Affairs at the Iranian MFA, as the deputy to FM Mottaki's Special Envoy on Iraq, and as the Charg d'Affaires at Iran's embassy in Baghdad.

¶6. (C) Comment: Abdollahian is an activist ambassador, who over the past two years has developed a high public profile and used it to aggressively advocate for Iranian policy in Bahrain. At the same time, he is a cautious diplomat who is not prone to freelancing. It is likely that his remarks were vetted based on instructions from Tehran prior to the

interview. End comment.

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